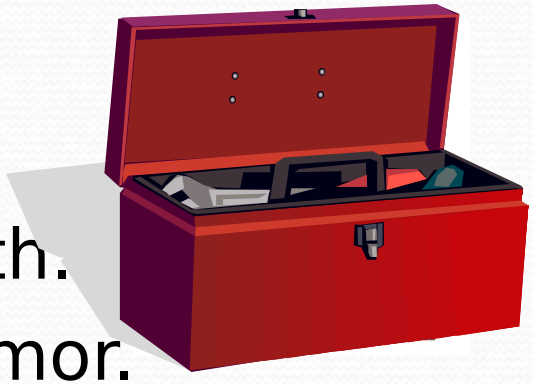
Healer, Heal Thyself…

A Commonsense Guide for the Prevention of Compassion Fatigue

You are your equipment…

So you better maintain it

Your equipment...



- Your heart for helping.
- Your skills.
- Your experience.
- Your place on the team.
- Your energy.
- Your flexibility.
- Your insight.
- Your health.
- Your family support.
- Your faith.
- Your humor.
- Your enthusiasm.
- Your training.
- Your willingness.
- Your compassion.
- Your time.
- Your resources.

Our Goals

- Recognize Vicarious Traumatization (VT
- Recognize the variables that increase your risk.
- Describe how VT changes basic assumptions about yourself/others/world.
- Recognize when VT is interfering with self or provision of care.
- Identify methods to support and increase resilience and positive coping.

Primary Traumatic Stress

- Direct exposure to, or witnessing of, extreme events and one is overwhelmed by the trauma.

- Figley, 1992

Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Direct exposure to extreme events directly experienced by another and one is overwhelmed by the trauma.

- Figley and Kieber, 1995

Vicarious Traumatization (VT)

- The phenomenon of transmission of traumatic stress by bearing witness to the stories of traumatic events.
- VT can be experienced from once to numerous times.

- McCann & Pearlman, 1990

VT = A Natural Process

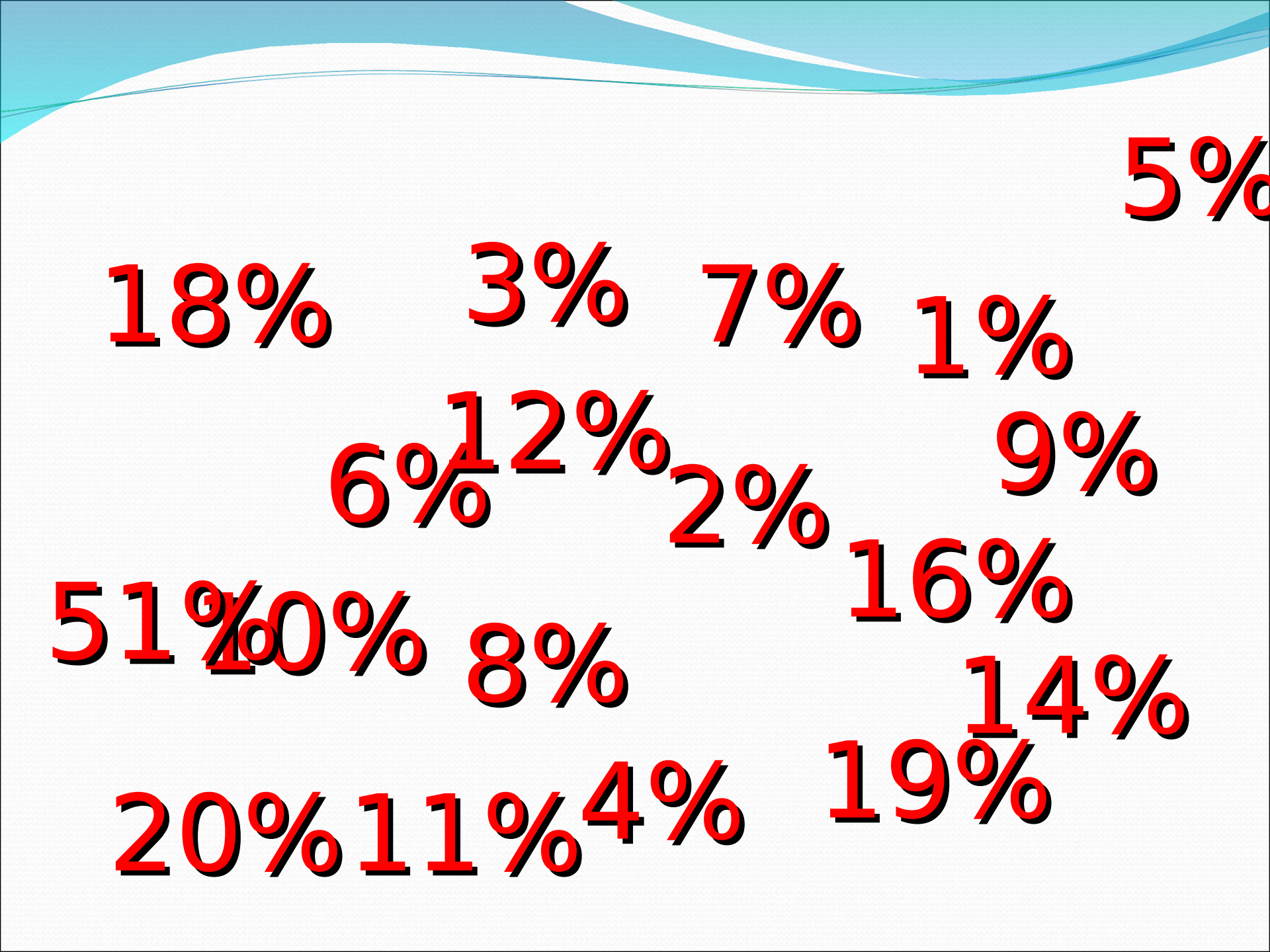
- VT is a natural and inevitable response to spending significant time working with or studying trauma survivors.
- It creates a soul weariness that comes with caring.
- It results from doing business with the handiwork of fear. Sometimes it lives on the edges of one's life…at others, it comes crashing in, overtaking one with its vivid images of another's terror with its profound demands for attention; nightmares, strange fears, and generalized hopelessness.

(Stamm)

Vicarious Traumatization

"...is the transformation that occurs within the trauma counselor as a result of empathetic engagement with clients' trauma experiences and their sequelae."

Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995)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When a helper suffers from VT..

- There is a transformative effect upon the provider of working with survivors or those who are suffering.
- A process through which the provider's inner experience is negatively transformed through empathic engagement with the client's trauma material.

- Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995

Paving Paradise

"Don't it always seem to go,

That you don't know what you've got til it's gone...

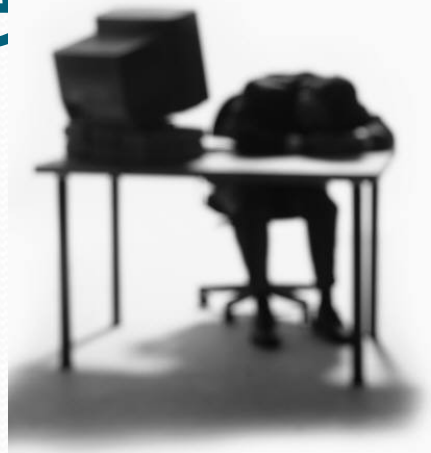
Pave paradise, put up

a parking lot."

Joni Mitchell

Compassion Fatigue

....the cumulative effect of:



Primary Traumatic Stress

(direct trauma experience of provider)

Secondary Traumatic Stress

(direct witnessing of others' trauma)

Vicarious Traumatization

(Bearing witness to others' trauma stories)

Compassion Fatigue

Symptoms

- Preoccupation with clients' traumatic events.
- Avoidance and numbing of events.
- Increased negative arousal.
- Lowered frustration tolerance.
- Intrusive thoughts of clients material.
- Dread of working with certain clients.
- Decrease in subjective sense of personal safety.
- Feelings of therapeutic impotence.
- Diminished sense of purpose.
- Decreased functioning in a number of areas.

What Is Adaptive Denial?

- You have to minimize the psychological and physical dangers of the job in order to be able to do it.
- Each time you encounter danger, your worldview on this changes, in varying amounts.
- It can be in response to physical danger and/or your feelings about what happened that day.

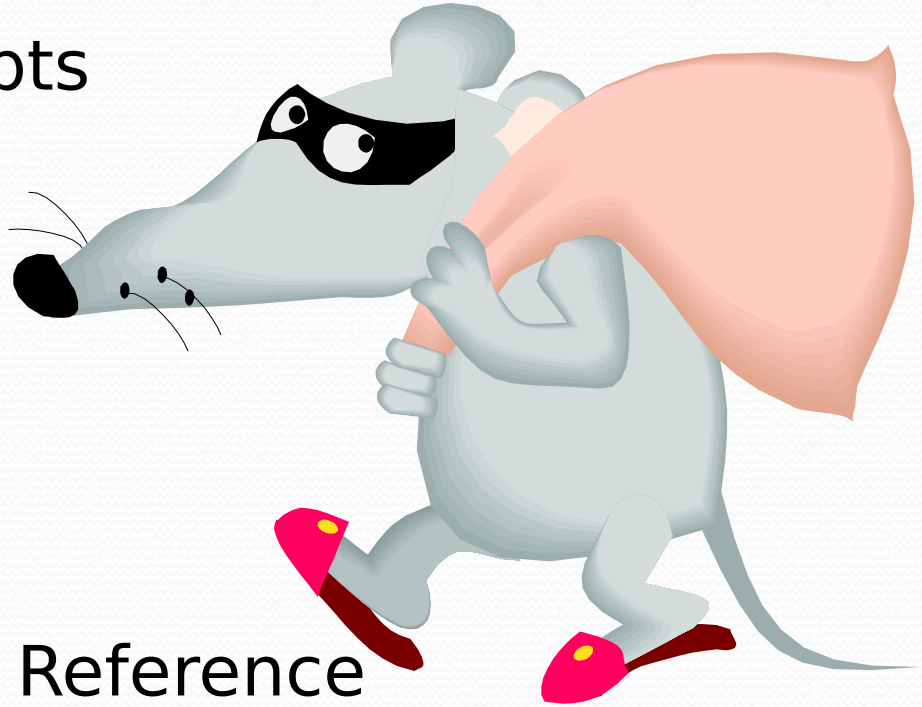
VT is a stone thrown into water.

Contributing Factors

- Proximity to situation.
- Relationship with those involved.
- Surprise or shock.
- Presence of interpersonal violence.
- Your history of witnessing violence.
- Unresolved personal issues.
- Lack of skills/knowledge.
- Understanding of ethical issues.
- Awareness of the effect of trauma on others.
- Self-awareness.
- Professional identity.
- Administrative support.
- Competent supervision.

The Intruder

- VT intrudes on/disrupts



- Cognitive processes
- Psychological needs
- Memory System
- World View/Frame of Reference

Cognitive Processes

- Decreased trust
- Sense of safety
- Self-esteem
- Intimacy
- Connectedness

- Catastrophizing
- Minimizing
- Discounting positives
- Dwelling on negatives
- All or nothing thoughts
- Mind reading
- Self Blame

Psychological Needs

Decreased self-worth

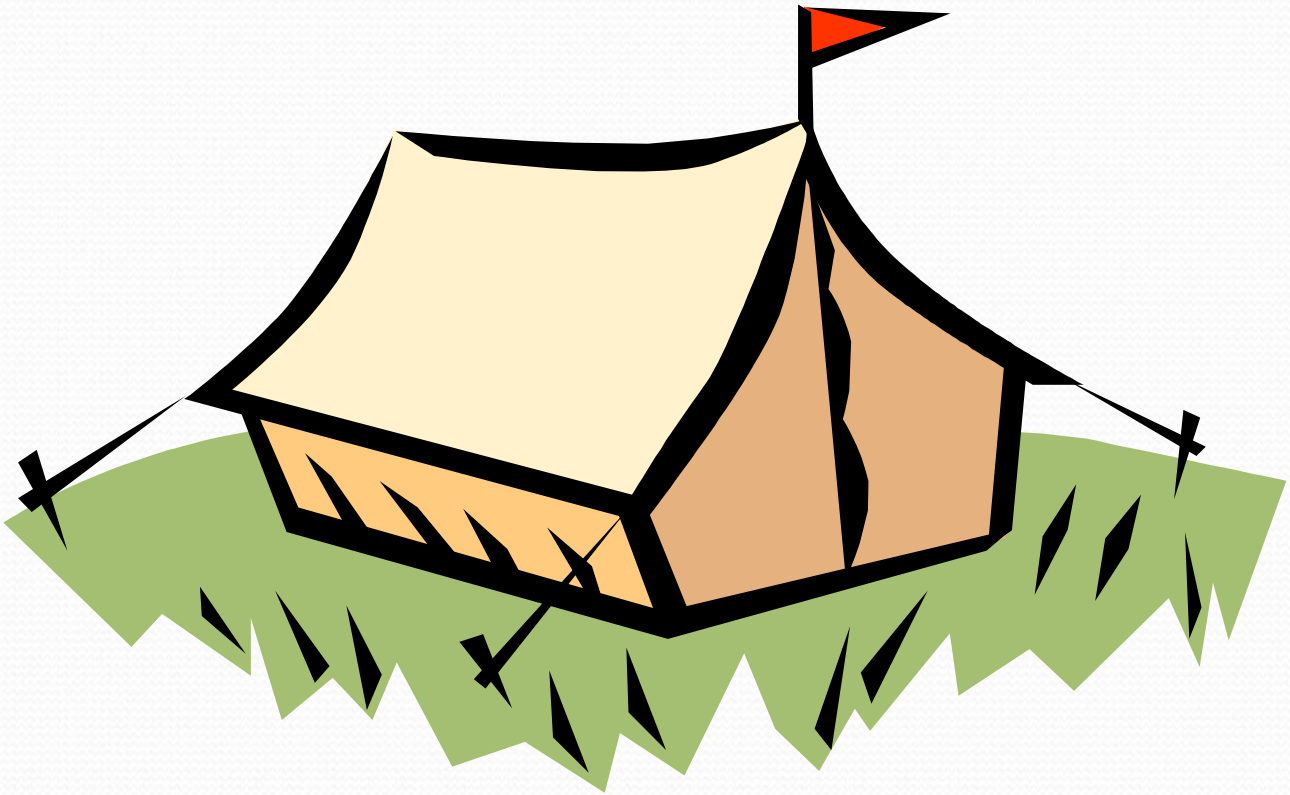
Self-depreciation

Hopelessness

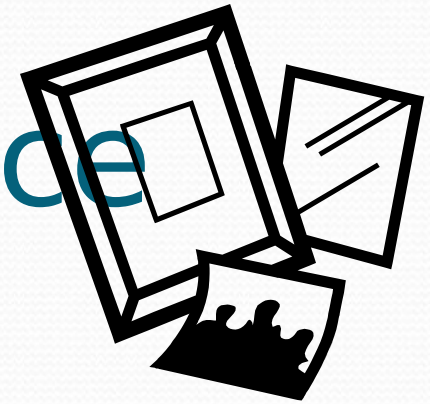
Helplessness

Memory System

- Internalization of clients' memories
- Flashbacks of their material
- Dreams
- Intrusive thoughts of their material
- Powerful emotional states upon reminders of the traumatic material (e.g.. sadness or anger)



Frame of Reference



Your basic identity is challenged.

Spirituality can be questioned.

World view can be shattered.

Resilience: Red Flag

- Overwhelmed, feeling like you can't cope
- Agitated/irritable/nervous/up tight
- Isolated
- Depressed
- Lack of interest in things
- General negative attitude
- Problems staying/falling asleep
- Low energy
- Lying awake worrying
- Work intruding on home life

Five Principles

- Trauma is in the eye of the beholder.
- It’s a normal response to an abnormal situation.
- It is a psychobiological event.
- What you resist persists.
- Coping styles count!

Well, no kidding….

- ***The greater the percentage of difficult cases on the provider's caseload, the greater the number of VT symptoms noted.***

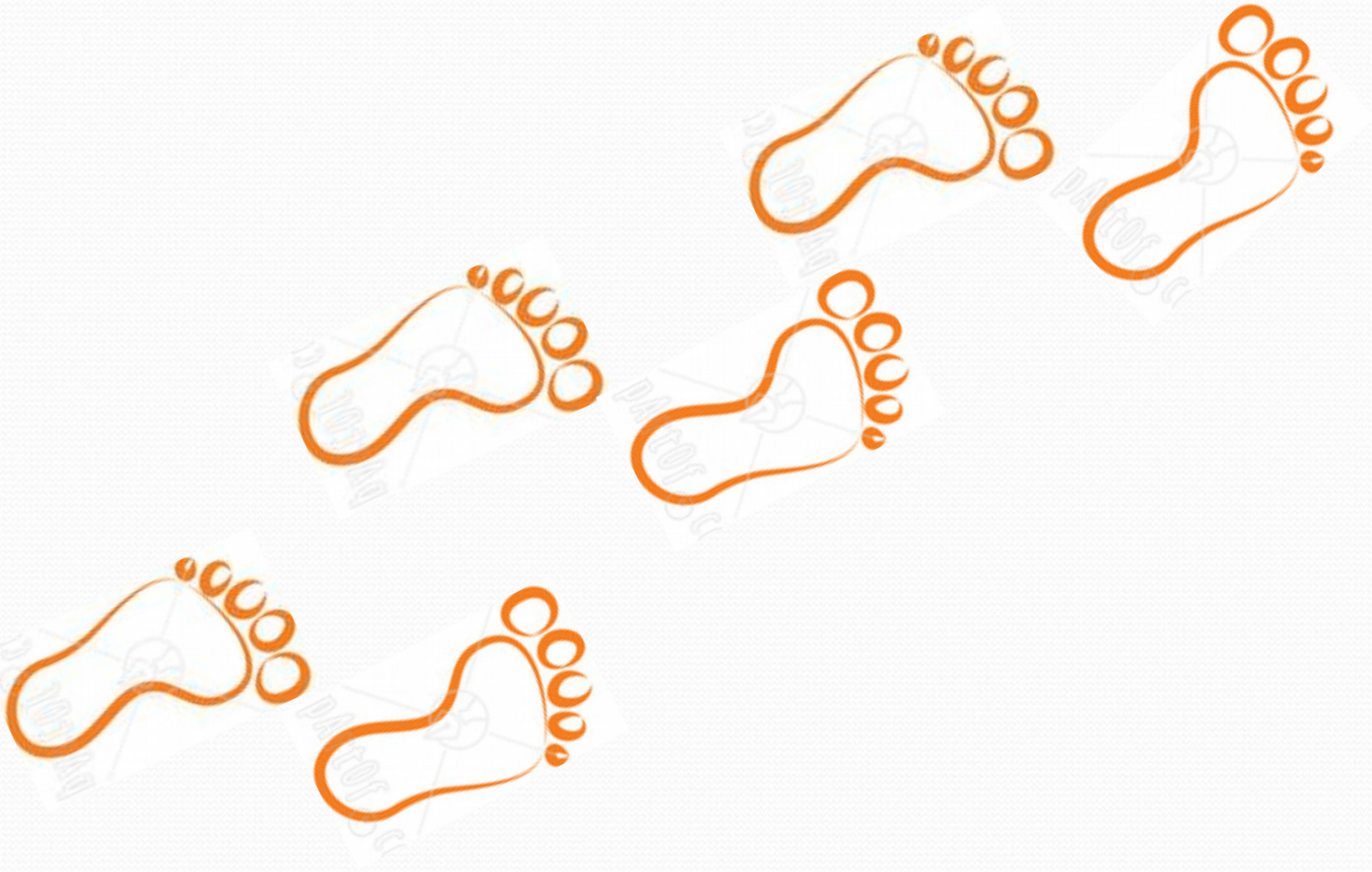
- Adams et al, 2001.

The Worst Case Scenarios

- Domestic Violence
- Child Abuse
- Substance Abuse
- Suicide
- Divorce
- Custody Issues
- Financial Issues

It looks like this...

"Work was like a double edged sword. On one side, there was the mission, a purpose in my life, something beyond myself that gave life meaning. On the opposite side, I was working through my own trauma story, identifying with other survivors and trying to make a difference in their lives. It cuts both ways: the mission side of the sword was cutting me to shreds while I was bleeding to death from over-identifying with my clients."



Provider Self Care

Ethical Obligations

- “When psychologists become aware of personal problems that may interfere with their performing work-related duties adequately, they take appropriate measures, such as obtaining professional consultation or assistance, and determine whether they should limit, suspend or terminate work related duties.”

- APA Code of Ethics; Section 2.06 (Personal Problems and Conflicts)

Know yourself and your team

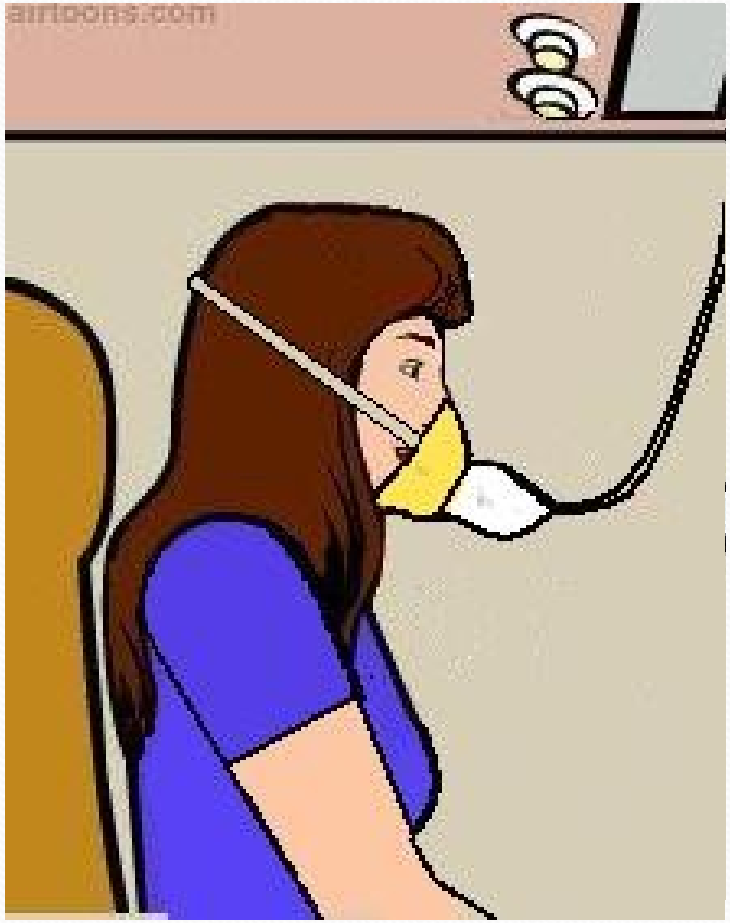
What describes it for you?

What do ***you*** need to do about it?

- Hitting the wall is “….like in a marathon race, the wall was that place, that moment in time, when both my mind and my body collapsed. Hitting the wall was a frightening, painful and disorientating experience.”

- Brian Walker, Canadian Association for Pastoral Practice and Education/www.cappe.org

Take Care Of Yourself First



Pay attention to your
WEATHERPROOF
8" BELL(200mm)
97dB
25mA
24V DC
Early Warning System.

You need...

The ability to self soothe.

The ability to separate yourself.

The ability to find meaning.

Personal Resilience

- ***Be aware*** of one's limits, emotions and resources.
- ***Maintain balance*** personally and professionally.
- ***Stay connected*** to your inner self, others and your faith.
- ***Stay connected to others***, which breaks the silence on unacknowledged pain.

This offsets isolation and increases validation and hope.

Helpful hints

- Acknowledge the trauma.
- Maintain a normal schedule.
- Create balance and separate work and your personal life.
- Pay attention to basic/good self care.
- Do not “numb out” with excesses of alcohol/gambling/eating/ shopping/TV
- Minimize your exposure to traumatic stimuli, including TV/movies/newscasts
- Play!
- Nurture yourself.
- Know your red flags.
- Debrief with colleagues.
- Seek further assistance after a few weeks.
- Consider personal counseling.

Professional Resilience

- Know whom you can't work with.
- Refer certain clients.
- Manage your caseload (variety)
- Continuing education.
- Confide in colleague.
- Express emotions.
- Seek support.
- Obtain supervision and consultation.
- Take mental health breaks.
- Instill hope and meaning to your work.

Organizational Resilience

Provide and Offer

Adequate funding/space/supplies

Access to referrals and benefits

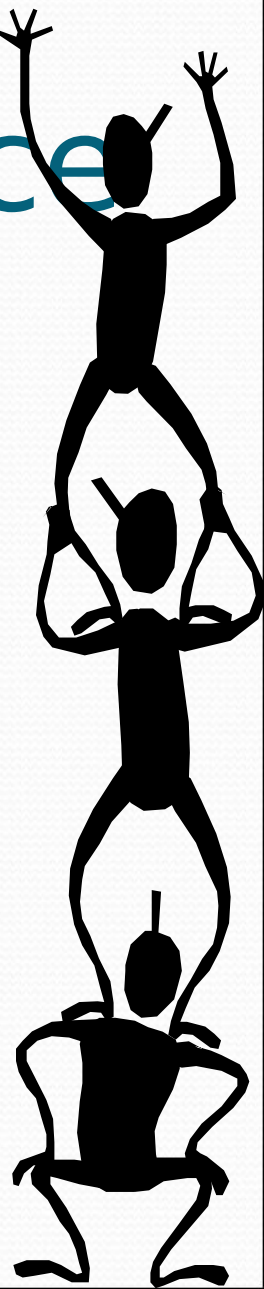
Balance and manage caseloads

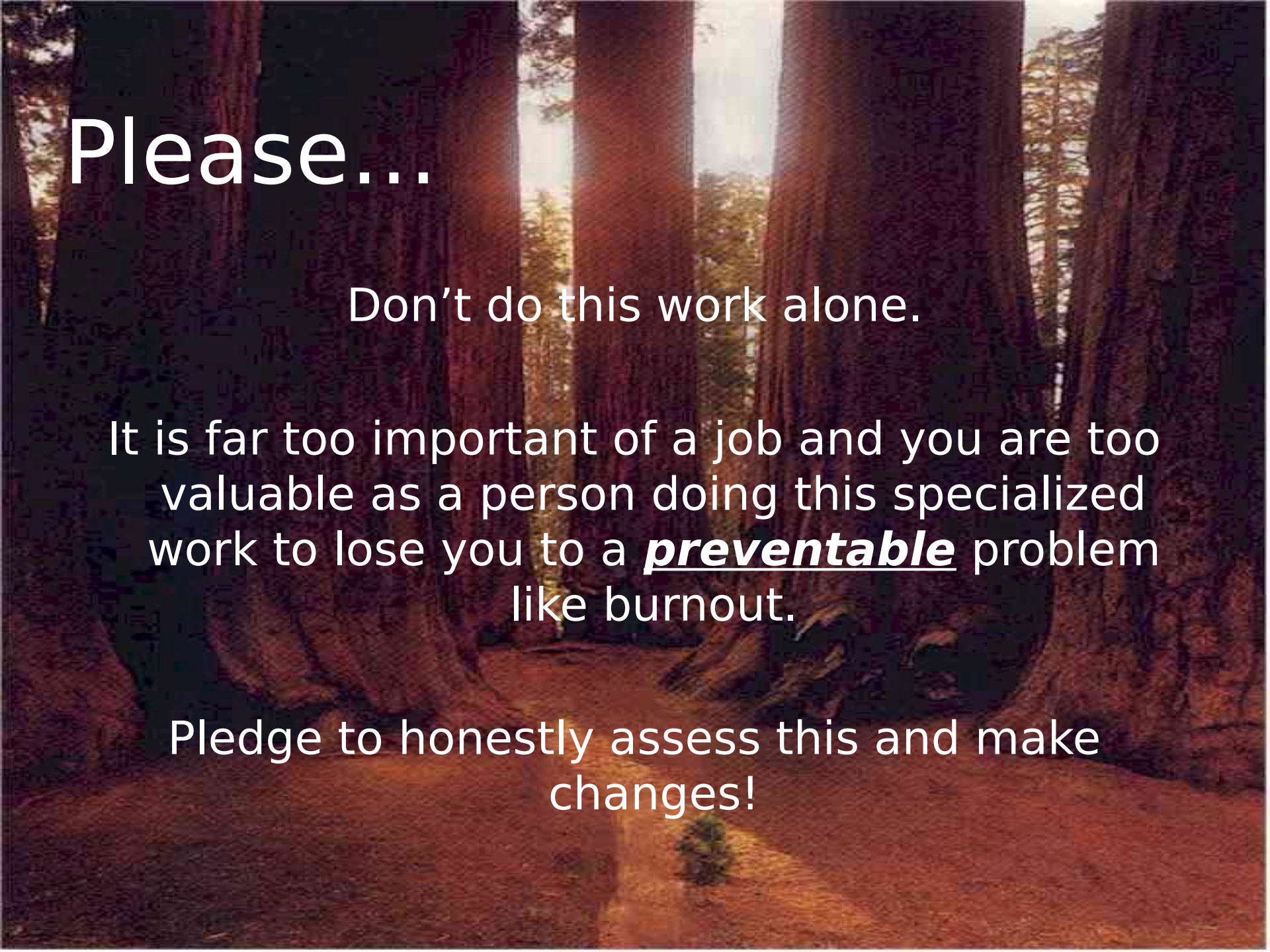
Provide inservice opportunities

Acknowledge and respect the work being done

Provide atmosphere of growth and encouragement

Adequate resources/Safe physical space





Please…

Don’t do this work alone.

It is far too important of a job and you are too valuable as a person doing this specialized work to lose you to a ***preventable*** problem like burnout.

Pledge to honestly assess this and make changes!

Thank you for the work you do

helping to bring our veterans ***all the way home***.

Questions and Comments?

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